

It is important that answers to frequently asked questions about NAEP are readily available to you. What follows is a synopsis of information that you may find helpful as questions about the assessment come to you. If there are questions not covered here, or for which there may not be an immediate answer, please call us at 800–223–0267 for prompt assistance.

### WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS ESSENTIAL AND VALUED.

PROJECT MISSION. NAEP is authorized by Congress and directed and funded by the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics) to report on what American students know and can do in key academic subjects. It has produced more than 200 reports in its 31-year history, chronicling trends over time in the performance of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds and fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students. The results are reported in the aggregate for large groups; no student or school data are reported. Information is reported by average proficiency; racial/ethnic and gender status; region; type of school; parents' education; teachers' emphases; and a variety of home and school supports for learning. It is important to note that student participation is voluntary and confidential.

THE CONTENT OF NAEP. By law, for each subject assessed, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) manages the development of frameworks that detail what students might reasonably be expected to know and do. These frameworks are the "blue-prints" for developing tasks that measure the content specified. For information about framework development, please contact Mary Crovo at the National Assessment Governing Board, 202–357–6941.

In 2001, national assessments will be conducted in U.S. history and world geography at grades four, eight, and twelve. Field tests in reading and writing will also be conducted at grades four, eight, and twelve. The questions have been subjected to rigorous review by teachers and other leaders in the subjects, as well as a careful review by Educational Testing Service to ensure that the questions and possible responses meet the standards of the content specifications, quality, and fairness.

#### 2001 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

Students are also asked to respond to questions covering demographics, parental education, school conditions, and classroom teaching. The questions are routinely asked so that parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders who read the national reports can better understand the relationship between students' experiences and their learning. Although many of these questions have been tested and used before, certain minor changes may have been made. Please refer to the special section of this document for more information about the background questions.

CONFIDENTIALITY PROCEDURES. The project does not maintain permanent files of names of students. To further ensure confidentiality, students' names are removed from completed assessment booklets and questionnaires before they leave the school. NCES has strict confidentiality standards to ensure that no personally identifiable information is ever released to third parties. Throughout its history, NAEP has respected the privacy of individuals and organizations. This trust has never been breached.

PARENTAL NOTICE/CONSENT. Parental consent is not normally required for student participation in NAEP. Parental notice letters, however, are provided by NAEP for use by your local staff, along with adaptable letters if the school, district, or state has a policy of requiring that parental consent be obtained.

**EXAMINATION OF SECURE NAEP ITEMS.** Quite often, a review of the demonstration book provided to the school coordinator or principal will be sufficient to satisfy the interest of those who want to review the assessment. That booklet, which NAEP encourages officials to reproduce locally, contains all student background questions and sample test questions in U.S. history and world geography.

Within the limits of staff and resources, however, procedures enable school administrators and parents to review the NAEP questions that will be administration date(s) so that sufficient materials can be available and interested persons can be notified about the location and time for the review. Upon request, our staff will meet with small groups of parents to review the NAEP booklets, with the understanding that no NAEP questions will be duplicated, copied, or removed. These requests may be made to the NAEP data collection staff, or by contacting the National Center for Education Statistics at 202–502–7300. Individuals without children in the assessment who wish to examine secure NAEP items are invited to contact the U.S. Department of Education's Freedom of Information Act officer at 202–708–4753.

#### INFORMATION FOR PRINCIPALS

OBTAINING NAEP QUESTIONS. Most NAEP questions and tasks are not generally released to the public because these materials are reused and thus must be kept secure if the project is to report trends in academic performance accurately. However, approximately one-third of each assessment is designated for public release; each NAEP report contains a sample of actual test questions. The questions released for public and research use can be obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Released Exercises, 1990 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006. Previously released questions may also be viewed on the NCES Web site at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard.

**EXPLANATION OF NAEP STUDENT BACKGROUND QUESTIONS.** The usefulness of the national assessment results increases when parents, educators, and policymakers are able to study the proficiencies (or scores) along with information about student experience, the school environment, and opportunities for students to learn. Following are all of the general background questions for U.S. history, world geography, reading, and writing and a discussion of some information that has proven to be important as the direct result of asking certain questions. Some questions are asked only of eighth- or twelfth-grade students.

#### 2001 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

#### NAEP BACKGROUND QUESTIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS:

#### 1. Which best describes you?

This question uses racial/ethnic categories for reporting assessment results based on census classifications. This is a self-report question. For students who state multiracial origins, the Other category is recommended. Policymakers and the public find this variable essential to describe segments of the student population who may be having difficulty, doing well, or improving in performance over time.

#### 2. If you are Hispanic, what is your Hispanic background?

This question has been requested by Hispanic/Latino organizations to indicate, more precisely, the achievement of this population group.

- 3. Does your family get a newspaper at least four times a week?
- 4. Does your family get any magazines regularly?

#### 5. About how many books are in your home?

Questions 3–5 and 7 are literacy questions that have been asked for decades. When combined, they provide a composite indicator of the literacy environment in the home. This composite is a good predictor of a family's interest in education and is a component of the NAEP surrogate for SES. NAEP researchers have found that the number of literacy items in the home is correlated with educational performance.

- 6. Is there a computer at home that you can use?
- 7. Is there an encyclopedia in your home?
- 8. Is there a world atlas in your home?

### 9. How often do you talk about things you have studied in school with someone in your family?

(Question 10 in the Reading and Writing Field Test.)

Students who discuss homework with parents or siblings perform better than those students who do not discuss education issues at home.

### 10. On a school day, about how many hours do you usually watch TV or videotapes outside of school?

(Question 11 in the Reading and Writing Field Test.)

Students watching television passively are not actively engaging their minds. This is especially true for most commercial television shows. Time spent watching television is time spent not reading, exercising, or interacting socially with peers. In addition, exposure to television creates an intolerance for the pace and format of schooling. NAEP achievement is negatively correlated with large amounts of television viewing.

### 11. Do your parents know the amount of time you spend watching TV on a school day?

(Question 12 in the Reading and Writing Field Test.)

## 12. Which statement best describes the rules that your parents have about the amount of TV you can watch on school days? (Question 13 in the Reading and Writing Field Test.)

### 13. Do your parents know whether you finish your homework each day?

(Question 14 in the Reading and Writing Field Test.)

### 14. Which statement best describes the rules that your parents have about getting your homework done?

(Question 15 in the Reading and Writing Field Test.)

#### 15. How often do you use a computer outside of school?

(This question is not asked in the General Background section of the Reading and Writing Field Test.)

### 16. How many days were you absent from school in the last month?

The more time that is spent in school, the greater the academic achievement. Although NAEP is administered during the season with the greatest number of colds and influenza outbreaks, there remains a high correlation between school attendance and performance.

### 17. How often do people in your home talk to each other in a language other than English?

(Question 19 for eighth and twelfth graders.)

Students who speak a language other than English at home may have special needs and perform at a lower level than those who always speak English at home. National as well as state policymakers want this data when interpreting NAEP results and studying the needs of this population group.

#### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ASKED OF EIGHTH AND TWELFTH GRADERS:

- 1. How far in school did your mother go?
- 2. How far in school did your father go?

Parental education is strongly correlated with academic achievement. It is also a component of socioeconomic status (SES). NAEP is required by law to report on the performance of students by SES. This information has been used by researchers to explain the dramatic improvement in NAEP scores by Black students as a function of the rise in parental high school completion and college education rates.

### ADDITIONAL QUESTION ASKED IN THE READING AND WRITING FIELD TEST:

1. About how many pages a day do you have to read in school and for homework?

# FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, OR FOR PROMPT FIELD STAFF SUPPORT, PLEASE CALL 800–283–6237.

On behalf of NAEP, the project team wishes to thank you and other members of your school system for agreeing to participate in the NAEP assessment. NAEP's benchmark data about student achievement and instructional emphases that support it are widely used for staff development, curriculum planning, and briefing the many deliberative bodies concerned with student performance. By your voluntary assistance, you join a cooperative partnership with school leaders across the country who believe that information about this nation's educational progress is a critical and objective ingredient for public and professional discussion about policy and direction. It is also an important way to measure our success in ensuring that all students learn to use their minds well.